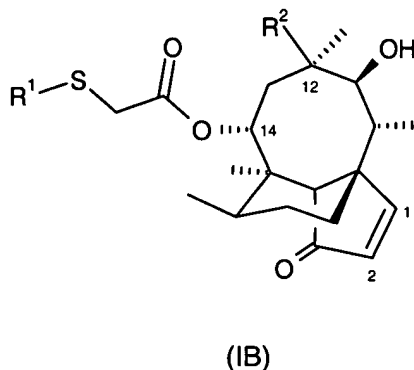
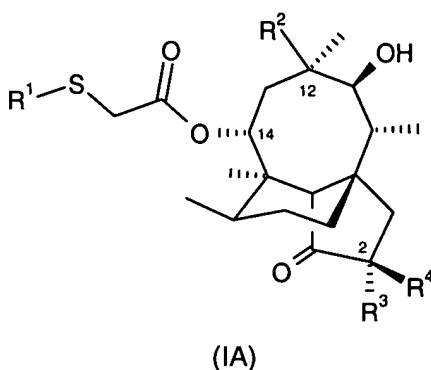


Amendments to the Claims:

We claim:

1. (Currently Amended) A compound of formula (IA) or (IB):



~~in which wherein:~~

~~R¹ is phenyl or a five- or six-membered aryl or heteroaryl ring, wherein R¹ is substituted by a carboxylic acid group that is attached at a position which is not adjacent to the point of attachment of the sulphur, and wherein R¹ is optionally further substituted by up to four groups independently selected from halogen, (C₁₋₆)alkyl, aryl, aryl(C₁₋₆)alkyl, (C₁₋₆)alkoxy, (C₁₋₆)alkoxy(C₁₋₆)alkyl, halo(C₁₋₆)alkyl, aryl(C₁₋₆)alkoxy, hydroxy, nitro, cyano, azido, amino, mono- and di-N-(C₁₋₆)alkylamino, acylamino, arylcarbonylamino, acyloxy, carbamoyl, mono- and di-N-(C₁₋₆)alkylcarbamoyl, (C₁₋₆)alkoxycarbonyl, aryloxy, carbonyl, ureido, guanidino, (C₁₋₆)alkylguanidino, amidino, (C₁₋₆)alkylamidino, sulphonylamino, aminosulphonyl, (C₁₋₆)alkylthio, (C₁₋₆)alkylsulphonyl, (C₁₋₆)alkylsulphonyl, heterocyclyl, heteroaryl, heterocyclyl(C₁₋₆)alkyl and heteroaryl(C₁₋₆)alkyl, or two adjacent ring carbon atoms may be linked by a (C₃₋₅)alkylene chain, to form a carbocyclic ring;~~

~~R² is vinyl or ethyl; and~~

~~R³ is hydrogen, hydroxy or fluorine and R⁴ is hydrogen,~~

~~or R³ is hydrogen and R⁴ is fluorine;~~

~~or a pharmaceutically acceptable derivative thereof;~~

~~with the proviso that the compound of formula (IA) is not (2-carboxylate-phenylsulfonyl)-acetic acid mutilin 14 ester.~~

2. (Original) A compound according to claim 1 wherein R¹ is a five- or six-membered aryl ring or a five- or six-membered heteroaryl ring containing up to three heteroatoms independently selected from nitrogen, sulphur or oxygen, substituted by a carboxylic acid group.

3. (Currently Amended) A compound according to claim 1 ~~or 2~~ wherein R¹ is a six-membered aryl ring or a six-membered heteroaryl ring containing one or two nitrogen atoms, substituted by a carboxylic acid group.

4. (Currently Amended) A compound according to ~~any one of the preceding claims~~ claim 1 wherein R¹ is phenyl or pyridyl, substituted by a carboxylic acid group.

5. (Original) A compound according to claim 1 selected from:
(4-carboxylato-phenylsulfanyl)-acetic acid mutilin 14-ester;
(4-carboxylato-phenylsulfanyl)-acetic acid 19,20-dihydro-mutilin 14-ester;
(3-carboxylato-phenylsulfanyl)-acetic acid mutilin 14-ester; and
(5-carboxylato-pyridin-2-yl-sulfanyl)-acetic acid mutilin 14-ester;
or a pharmaceutically acceptable derivative thereof.

6. (Currently Amended) A pharmaceutical composition comprising a compound as claimed in ~~any one of claims 1 to 5~~ claim 1, or a pharmaceutically acceptable derivative thereof, and a pharmaceutically acceptable excipient, diluent or carrier.

7. (Currently Amended) A compound as claimed in ~~any one of claims 1 to 5~~ claim 1, or a pharmaceutically acceptable derivative thereof, for use in therapy.

8. (Cancelled)

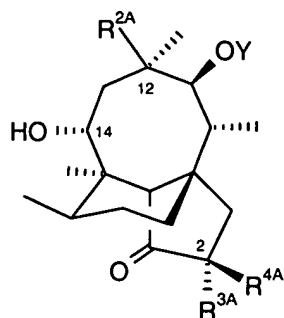
9. (Cancelled)

10. (Currently Amended) A method of treating microbial infections in animals, ~~especially in humans and in domesticated mammals~~, which comprises administering a compound according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 5~~ claim 1, or a pharmaceutically acceptable derivative thereof, or a composition according to the invention, to a patient in need thereof.

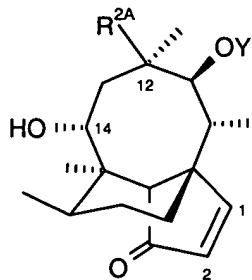
11. (Currently Amended) A method of treatment of skin and soft tissue infections in humans, which comprises topically administering a compound according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 5~~ claim 1, or a pharmaceutically acceptable derivative thereof, or a composition according to the invention, to a patient in need thereof.

12. (Original) A process for preparing a compound of formula (IA) or (IB) as claimed in claim 1 which process comprises:

(a) reacting a compound of formula (IIA) or (IIB):

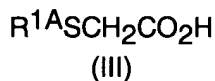


(IIA)



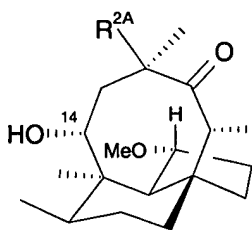
(IIB)

in which Y is hydrogen or a hydroxy protecting group, and R^{2A}, R^{3A} and R^{4A} are R², R³ and R⁴ as defined in claim 1 or groups convertible R², R³ and R⁴, with an active derivative of a carboxylic acid of formula (III):



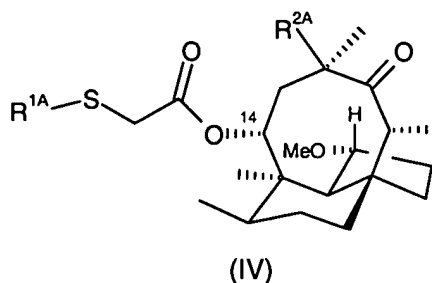
where R^{1A} is R¹ as defined in claim 1 or a group convertible to R¹, under ester forming conditions and, where required or desired, converting Y to hydrogen, converting an R^{2A}, R^{3A} and R^{4A} group to a R², R³ and R⁴ group, and/or converting one R², R³ and R⁴ group to another R², R³ and R⁴ group;

(b) for a compound of formula (IA) in which R³ and R⁴ are both hydrogen, reacting an epi-mutilin compound of formula (IIC):



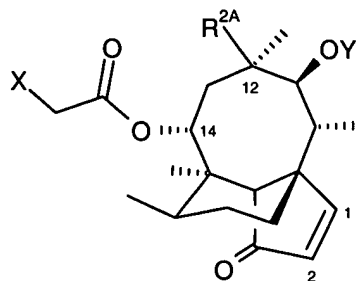
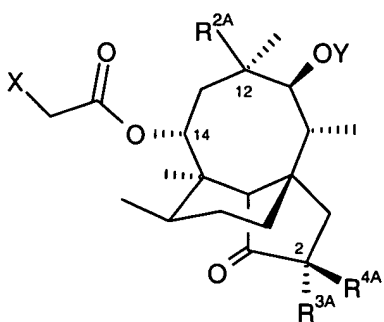
(IIC)

in which R^{2A} is R² as defined in claim 1, or a group convertible to R²; with a compound of formula (III) as hereinbefore defined; to give a compound of formula (IV):

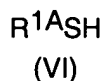


then treating the product with an acid and, where required or desired, converting an R^{1A} group to an R¹ group and an R^{2A} group to an R² group;

(c) reacting a compound of formula VA or VB

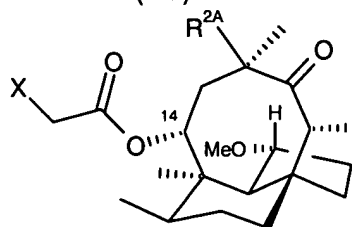


wherein X is a leaving group, Y is hydrogen or a hydroxy protecting group, and R^{2A}, R^{3A} and R^{4A} are R², R³ and R⁴ as defined in claim 1 or groups convertible to R², R³ and R⁴,
 with a compound of formula (VI):



where R^{1A} is R¹ as defined in claim 1 or a group convertible to R¹ and, where required or desired,
 converting Y to hydrogen,
 converting an R^{1A}, R^{2A}, R^{3A} or R^{4A} group to an R¹, R², R³ or R⁴ group, and/or
 converting one R¹, R², R³ or R⁴ group to another R¹, R², R³ or R⁴ group;or

(d) reacting a compound of formula (VC):



(VC)

where X and R^{2A} are as defined for formulae VA and VB,
with the compound (VI),
then treating the product with an acid and, where required or desired,
converting an R^{1A} or R^{2A} group to a R¹ or R² group, and/or
converting one R¹ or R² group to another R¹ or R² group.